

The Community Spotlight

(So that you should know)

Tri-City, The One That Lasted

Story and photos by Barry Roland Burns

If you ever tried to start a business, club, organization or any other endeavor involving more than two people, you know how hard it is to coordinate these activities and keep what you started going. After 11 years of operating in Newark, Tri-City Citizens For Progress located at 675-681 So. 19th St. has and is surviving. Tri-City was conceived as a coalition with sister branches in Jersey City and Paterson, but the Newark branch is the only one that still exists.

After 11 years of existence Tri-City can look back with pride for it has accomplished some really amazing feats. Tri-City started in 1967 with 10 volunteers, meeting in a store front on Springfield Ave. In an effort to spell out what "Black Power" meant in real terms, not just in terms of rhetoric, so the first task or purpose was education. Tri-City quickly grew and started dealing in much needed housing projects.

The need for housing arose in the area out of the displacement of families during the construction of the N.J. College of Medicine and Dentistry, as well as the necessity to improve existing housing conditions in the 12 block area.

Tri-City became the non-profit sponsor for the rehabilitation of 300 units. Priorities Investment Corp. was the profit-making concern responsible for the rehab and also acted as management for the units. Tri-City took over management and ownership of the properties now known as Amity Village No. 1 and No. 2, when Priorities went out of business. Amity Village No. 1 has 96 units and was organized into a cooperative in 1971. The Co-Op has retained Tri-City as its management, but the board is made up entirely of residents of the Co-Op. Amity Village 2A is also owned by Tri-City and they will be converting those 200 units into a cooperative by the end of the year. A massive orientation campaign is under way to bring to light the responsibilities and joys of ownership to the residents of Amity Village 2A. Incorporation of the units will take place after Tri-City gets an affirmative vote from the majority of the families that reside there.

One of the major reasons for Tri-City's success in housing is the on-site maintenance staff that serves their community six days per week. The core maintenance staff received their training at Tri-City for the most part, lives right in the neighborhood. Living and working in and around your community accounts for one of the major reasons why blacks and other minorities have survived in what at times has been called a hostile environment. From the days of the cave dwellers to the Indian and African tribes the greatest and most long-lived civilizations were all self contained and tightly knit. Tri-City members are taking some of our roots out of the books and movies and putting them back into the communities where they belong.

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Operation Clean Up. The kids of Tri-City are taught early that pride in self begins with pride in environment. Maybe some parents might ride by and learn how its done.



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An energy conservation program is now under way in the 12 square block area. Amity residents and private homeowners are receiving instructions on home insulation methods, weatherstripping and energy loss analysis. A solar powered heating system, installed by the Tri-City maintenance staff and CETA Program trainees, is now in operation in one of the Amity Village 1 Co-Op homes. This system now supplies 60 percent of the heat and hot water needs of this 3 family dwelling.

Tri-City is also focusing in on the demolition, by the city of Newark, abandoned structures which are a danger to everyone as well as an eyesore. Vacant lots will be converted into recreational areas and mini-parks.

In 1971 Tri-City opened the people's center in the building that was once a Ukrainian Church at 675 So. 19th St. The three story brick structure now houses the Tri-City Day Care Center, its after school tutorial program and a staff training facility. The design of the day care facility is one of the most beautiful and interesting places for learning that this reporter has ever seen. The bi-cultural educational program now serves 110 children ranging from 2 to 8 years old on a daily year-round schedule. A year after the day care center, Tri-City opened a community health center at 582 So. 19th st. and last year opened a community aid and information center at 668 So. 20th street. Out of the aid and information center operates Project Go! A daily transportation service for the elderly, handicapped and financially disadvantaged.

Future Tri-City endeavors include, rehabilitation of 50 new apts in old abandoned buildings, organizing a community credit union in which members of the community will run and the expansion of all their health and educational services.

The Citizens Union for Progress is committed to not only the physical, educational, and economic development of the community, but to the self-sufficiency of its people. Over 75 percent of the staff of the organization resides in the 12 square block target area. Tri-City has taken advantage of Vista and Ceta grants which enable the participants to receive training as well as employment. Youth are employed at Tri-City through Youth Chance and SPEDY Programs.

Wider civic participation and political awareness are needed if this great organization is to continue to grow. Maybe other groups can find out how Tri-City workers are literally building a whole new Newark, and believe me if we need anything we need a whole new Newark. Tri-City is associated with coalitions of neighborhood organizations, social service organizations and is a member of the National Association of Neighborhoods, based in Washington, D.C. for more information on Tri-City and its activities call: Tri-City Citizens For Progress Inc. 347-5252



With a little community pride and some city government care and monies, old boarded-up eyesores can be turned into beautiful family homes. Tri-City did it!

